

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, December 14, 1879, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Sunday  
December 14, 1879. My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am properly ashamed of my long silence but it has been hard to settle to anything when everything is so unsettled and there was no paper in the house. Two letters I did manage but they did not say what I wanted and found an untimely end to their journey in the waste paper basket. I wanted to tell you all about my "hungarian brother" as he calls himself, as our heads and hearts were so full of him and my sister, but I could not manage it. Now I will only say, "he came, saw and conquered" He was so cordial, so friendly and determined to love all my sisters friends so full of life love and overflowing boyish spirits, it was quite impossible to do otherwise than like him. His hair is certainly remarkable standing up from his head and curling all over making him as sister herself said the funniest looking man one can want to see. Elsie was quite frightened at him at first but soon became very good friends. He took a great fancy to Alec and Alec too seems very fond of him and says he is certainly a very remarkable man and will become a distinguished one.

We have been in our house nearly two weeks now and are very comfortable though Alec thinks the house looks very bars, we have so few things of our own. But now we have so much money we mean to gradually collect pretty things around us and next year perhaps build our own house. Alec has about stopped railing at Washington and is beginning to find there are nice and scientific people here and now his laboratory is growing into completeness, dread the idea of moving out of it. He has painted the outside of the house, carpeted two floors, set up his red desk and revolving bookcase, sent for his pictures and is already fond of his own room. # In our own house he has at last managed after

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several hours work to get his big desk into position upstairs and I have had the furniture in that room recovered so it looks fresh and nice. The open fireplace too is a great 2 improvement. My own room is bare and unfinished, the brass bedstead is there but the curtains are not up as there is no carpet on the floor and Alec and I have not had a chance to go and look for carpets.

Just now I am busy over a waste paper basket for my brother for Xmas. The work is not much but as I am designing it as I go it makes it slow and hard. I am embroidering grass, daisies, buttercups etc. on crash.

We have got one men waiter and are both happy in his possession, and in that of a cook who if not as accomplished as I wish is a very good plain one and smart and anxious to learn. Everything goes so easily and smoothly I never have the least trouble about anything and my table is so tastefully arranged and so nicely served. Richard too does the marketing the bills being sent in once a week. I have all my silver on here and am now going to send for my books and my picture from the gallery. It hangs now in the post of honor in the best place in the portrait room and I believe is very much admired. The photographs certainly do not give even a tolerable idea of it, the coloring is so pretty. Papa says he would like it, even if only as a fancy picture and Mamma wants the Artist to paint Berts and Sister too. We went to Baltimore yesterday to look for Christmas presents and fancy furniture for both of our houses. Mamma bought a writing desk for sister and I a silver embossed cream pitcher. We are beginning to get her things little by little, though she does not expect to be married until early in the summer at our old home. I think we may have time to make you another visit before the wedding but doubt it. Among other things at a furniture store we saw for sale a chamber set of the most curious and exquisite in aid work belonging formerly to the Duke of Tuscany and very old. The price was only \$4,500.00! There was another set of sideboard and stand that must have cost fabulous sums they were so handsomely carved. I think I shall get an ebonized table for my parlor a plainer one for the dinning room and an ebonized bookcase, but waited 3 for Alec.

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Elsie has not been quite well since she left Canada, her cough hangs about her still though it is very soft, and though she sleeps well and eats pretty well she looks dreadfully white. The doctor has given her a tonic and thinks she will be alright now, her teeth were troubling her.

It has been beautifully warm and springlike here, and I have had hardly any need for my beautiful new sealskin suit though I have worn it a good deal. Elsie looks fascinating in her rabbitskin coat, hat and muff trotting up and down the road. But we shall be glad when her carriage makes its appearance as then she can stay out so much longer.

I hope you are all well and will have a Merry Christmas. I mean to write again before that but if I don't, yet we shall remember you and think of you and the pleasant visit, we had last month. I really was very sorry to leave you all but so anxious to hear all about my dear sister. I could not possibly wait for letters. Of course I knew it was alright, but then we must know something more than that about one so dear.

With a great deal of love to you all.

Lovingly, Mabel. # He has built a little hen house inside of his barn, got the nests ready and talks of hatching machines. He hasn't got as far as the hens themselves but is only awaiting my consent to buying a goat trained to drag baby carriages! I am afraid his fowls and animals will destroy what vestige of vegetation his back yard abounds in, but he calmly talks of plowing up the ground and sowing grass so it will be respectable next year.